

**Statement of Rep. Tom Davis,
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

***“The Lasting Impact of CPA Decision-Making on Iraq
Reconstruction”***

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Despite what we just heard, the true purpose and scope of these hearings has never been clear. What has been clear is an undisguised desire to publicly re-hash prior criticisms of the Iraq reconstruction effort. Most of what we'll hear today and tomorrow was first brought to light over the course of the nineteen hearings on Iraq conducted under this Committee's Republican leadership.

This is a classic example of “Ready ... Fire ... Aim!” oversight. In the past ten days, we have received more than 80,000 pages of documents from contractors in response to the Committee's requests. Some of those documents undoubtedly would shed light on matters to be addressed by our witnesses in these hearings.

But in rushing to take testimony before any one has the opportunity to carefully analyze all that material, the Committee starts with broad conclusions about the effectiveness of current reconstruction programs and supports those judgments only with a hastily culled and selective body of evidence. Reconstruction spending in Iraq and Afghanistan merits serious oversight, not this slap-dash rush to old judgments.

The majority continues to equate a lack of exquisite accounting in Iraq with massive waste. Clearly, there was leakage in the early, all-cash days of occupation and reconstruction. People have been prosecuted for diverting money. But limited visibility over payments to Iraqi ministries, by itself, simply does not establish the majority's alleged eight billion dollar flood of fraud.

And concerns about Coalition Provisional Authority hiring practices are based on anecdotes and hearsay, not evidence. The Special Inspector General for Iraq looked at CPA employment practices and did not find undue political influence.

Real oversight gathers evidence, then follows the facts to sound conclusions. To help us do just that, Mr. Chairman, beginning today the Republican Committee web site invites whistleblowers, and anyone else with information about waste, abuse, fraud or a needed reform, to provide information anonymously or to e-mail us at **OVERSIGHT@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV**. Whether the subject is Iraq reconstruction or why Sandy Berger was never given a polygraph, we want to help gather the facts that drive constructive oversight.

To be sure, many of us have been justifiably critical of the way Iraq reconstruction has been handled. Naïve assumptions about post-invasion Iraq were slow to give way to harsh but obvious realities. It turns out we brought neither the plans nor the personnel for long-term occupation and nation building from the ground up. Dissolution of Iraq's army and security forces, and rapid de-Ba'athification, created a vacuum we were not prepared to fill.

But we should not let any discussion of failed means paralyze our will to achieve honorable ends. The main value in revisiting past mistakes is to make sure the right lessons have been learned and corrective actions put in place. Self-righteous finger-wagging and political scapegoating won't make Iraq any more secure, won't rebuild that ravaged nation, and won't bring U.S. troops home any sooner.

Today, there are more than 300,000 trained and equipped Iraqi Security Forces taking control of the provinces. There is a new emphasis on getting Iraqi businesses up and running, and putting Iraqis back to work. Despite a prohibitive security environment, infrastructure projects are being completed. The Administration has brought back a critic of previous Iraq reconstruction policy, Ambassador Timothy Carney, and he has agreed to coordinate those efforts. We wish him success.

Ambassador Bremer and the Special Inspector General, Mr. Bowen, bring extensive experience and expertise to this discussion, and we are grateful they could be here today. And thank you Chairman Waxman for agreeing to our request to invite retired Admiral David Oliver. He worked as the Coalition Provisional Authority's management and budget officer and brings a unique perspective to these important issues. Welcome gentlemen.